
SUBJECT: Establishing Employee Performance Measures and Targets for 2005

EFFECTIVE: June 2, 2005

EXPIRES: September 30, 2005

FOR ACTION BY: State Statistical Offices and Headquarters Units

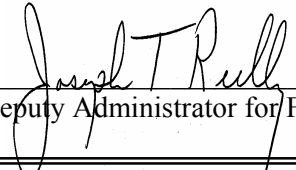
SEND RESPONSE TO: None

DUE DATE: June 17, 2005

PROJECT CODE: 365

REFERENCE: Policy & Standards Memorandum (PSM) 57-05 and P&P 435.2-NASS

Approved by:


Deputy Administrator for Field Operations

- I. General: Implementation of the new 5-level performance appraisal program began in April 2005. Earlier in the year, NASS managers and supervisors formally developed annual Agency goals that were consolidated into a new document called the NASS FY 2005 Goals Document. Each annual goal was aligned with NASS's long-term strategic goals. Linkage of these Agency goals to individuals' performance plans was accomplished by including them in Performance Element #2: Mission Results and Goal Accomplishment as performance standards. This alignment of the long-term strategic goals and cascading annual goals to employees' performance plans shows the extent of each employee's contribution to both the Agency's annual and long-term goals.
- II. Identifying Key Activities to Measure and Track: The next step in finalizing this year's new performance plan is to establish measures and targets for each performance standard (goal) in Performance Element #2. Important key activities will be used as performance measures that contribute to the accomplishment of specific goal(s). Performance targets represent expected outcomes or attainable output associated with specific work activities to be completed during the rating cycle. Performance is evaluated using timeliness, quality, quantity, and/or efficiency measures. The expected outcomes/output of activities are compared to the actual results and accomplishments of the employee to determine the element rating.

The most critical part of developing meaningful performance measures is carefully selecting "key" measures. These are measures that are important to Agency managers and supervisors who use them in tracking the progress of activities, allocating resources appropriately, being held accountable for accomplishing the highest and most urgent program priorities, and communicating results to employees, its customers and data users.

- III. Documenting Performance Measures and Targets: The following standard format should be used in documenting performance measures and targets in Performance Element #2: Mission Results & Goal Accomplishment in employee performance plans. The goal and its measures and targets are considered to be a performance standard.

Goal #: Indicate the goal number (#) and goal selected from the NASS FY 2005 Goals document. Supervisors may use any goal in this document regardless of its indicated ownership. Any project manager or team leader may prescribe the use of a goal, measure, and target for all members of the team or project assignment.

- **Measure:** Identify a measurable activity that supports the accomplishment of the goal and is the responsibility of the employee. In many cases, an “action description” associated with the above goal from the NASS FY 2005 Goals Document should be used. Indicate the activity description associated with the above goal from the NASS FY 2005 Goals document. Multiple measures can be developed for any goal.
 - **Target:** Define a specific expectation of each measure in terms of timeliness, quantity, quality, or level of efficiency for completing the activity or measure. The target should be attainable, reasonable, measurable, and objective. Multiple targets can be developed, as needed, for a given measure.

- IV. Rating Performance Elements: As stated in PSM 57-05, Section IV, a performance standard is a measure to tell the employee how well they have to perform/accomplish their work to meet a desired level of performance. NASS performance standards are only defined at the Fully Successful level.

Performance Element #2 should be evaluated by the supervisor in the same manner as the other elements (1, 3, 4 and 5) in employees performance plans. Supervisors should refer to the guidelines in Section VIII in the PSM for rating an employee “Exceeds Fully Successful”, “Meets Fully Successful”, or “Does Not Meet Fully Successful”. The additional factors outlined in Section IV should also be used as a guide in rating each element.

In situations, or if circumstances exists, where an employee who was not able to or could not contribute or participate in the outcome (or results) of an activity, through no fault of their own, the performance measure(s) and result(s) can be considered “not ratable” when deriving a rating of record. Any results associated with an unratable measure should be fully documented by the supervisor.

Every employee directly contributes, in some fashion, to the overall performance of the office (or unit). Therefore, the overall performance level of the office (or unit) should reflect the successes attained by the performance of employees in the office (or unit).

- V. Measuring Headquarters (HQ) Activities and Setting Targets: HQ personnel will use the NASS FY 2005 Goals Document as the basis for identifying performance standards (goals) and activities to be measured. HQ goals are most often referred to as Goals 1-299. In the development of the spreadsheet earlier this year, some HQ performance targets were established (using due dates, timelines, or quantities), but for those activities recently added, there are no targets. However, targets will continue to be updated and maintained in this spreadsheet on an on-going basis.

HQ managers and supervisors should use the above standard format in finalizing the performance standards for Performance Element #2. It is encouraged that the supervisor and employee work closely together in developing the wording and clear understanding of the desired expectations for each target. In developing a meaningful target(s) for the remainder of the rating year, emphasis should be placed on developing timeliness targets by using completion dates, timelines, etc. (If targets for quantity, quality, or level of efficiency can be developed, it is highly recommended some baseline data be readily available so a fair and reasonable target can be established and measured. Work will continue in expanding meaningful HQ targets for quantity, quality, or level of efficiency). Headquarters performance targets for Statistics Division and other HQ staff are illustrated in Attachment I.

- VI. Measuring Field Operations (FO) Activities and Setting Targets: Field office personnel will also use the NASS FY 2005 Goals Document as the basis for identifying and measuring Performance Standards (goals) and activities. The number of field office goals are limited in number and more generic than HQ goals, but are most often referred to as any goal over 300. Of course, other goals in addition to the 300 series goals, can be used as needed.

Field office managers and supervisors should also use the standard format in finalizing performance element #2. Unlike the wide variety of Headquarters activities and targets, all field offices will be using more standardized performance targets for most employees in 2005. The standardized performance targets for FO staff are illustrated in Attachment II.

Survey performance for each field office will be compared to the performance levels of other field offices. Comparison of survey performance will be used for ranking field offices nationally by Headquarters FO management to set rating levels for each office (targets exceeding expectations, targets meeting expectations, and targets not meeting expectations). The spreadsheet attached to this A-instruction shows the layout of data and information that will be populated with survey performance information for survey quality, timeliness, and efficiency by the Survey Administration Branch. Additionally, field offices will receive a State-level, survey-by-survey spreadsheet similar to those distributed at the February Director's Meetings. They are designed to be used by FO management in Headquarters and the Field Offices on a quarterly basis. For the 2005 rating year, a survey performance baseline will be established using the HQ spreadsheet for each field office for the designated probability surveys conducted during the April through June 2005 period.

- VII. Responsibility for Review and Approval of Measures and Targets: First-line supervisors are responsible for working with employees in developing fair and attainable performance measures and targets to be used in Performance Element #2 in employee performance plans. Second-line supervisors serve as reviewing officials who also must approve each plan. Senior Executives are not required to approve most performance plans but should be kept fully informed of the activities being measured and targets established.

Most employee performance plans should have been completed on or about May 1, 2005 with selected goals for Performance Element #2. All updated performance plans require initialing and must be dated when any changes are incorporated. In this case, incorporating new measures and targets will require initials and dates of the rating and reviewing official, and of the employee upon receipt of changes in the plan.

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- VIII. Due Date: All performance measures and targets should be incorporated into employees' performance plans by June 17, 2005. Any changes made to performance plans must be made 90 days prior to the end of the rating year, September 30, 2005.

Additional page attachments to employee performance plans, using goal-measure-target format, are acceptable in order to simplify and reduce the administrative time of updating the Performance Element #2 page and reformatting the performance plan document.

Attachment I - Headquarters (HQ) Supervisory & Non-supervisory Statisticians
Attachment II - Field Operations Supervisory & Non-supervisory Statisticians
Field Operations Excel Spreadsheet File Attachment

Headquarters (HQ) Supervisory & Non-supervisory Statisticians

The following standardized HQ performance measures and targets illustrate measures and targets that should be used in performance plans for Statistics Division Branch Chiefs, Section Heads, Statisticians, and Computer Specialists who are directly responsible for processing data, summaries, and estimates submission files for designated National probability and non-probability surveys. These measures and targets can also be used by support staff, if they are directly responsible. Branch Chiefs and Section Heads should include most of the measures and targets below. For non-supervisory statisticians and computer specialists, one or more of the measures and targets below may be used depending on work assignments for processing, report, and/or commodity responsibilities (and are not limited to this set of standardized measures and targets).

Goal 29: Complete all data products on time, accurately, and error-free.

- **Measure:** Data are reviewed accurately and in a timely fashion.
 - **Target:** For assigned responsibilities, data are reviewed with few unexplained data problems present in the summary.
 - **Target:** The summary is run on time with few reruns due to data problems.
- **Measure:** Timely HQ processing of State and National commodity estimates.
 - **Target:** The summary is reviewed accurately and data is ready for estimate setting.
 - **Target:** The Estimation tool is operational and available for States and HQ.
 - **Target:** State recommendations are reviewed and National estimates are set to meet internal due dates.
- **Measure:** National ASB reports are released on time as scheduled.
 - **Target:** For assigned responsibilities, 95 percent of assigned National ASB reports are released on time.
- **Measure:** National ASB reports are released accurately and error-free to the public.
 - **Target:** For assigned responsibilities, the number of corrections made to ASB National reports declined from the same period a year ago.
- **Measure:** Data released to public is posted error-free on QuickStats.
 - **Target:** For assigned commodities, data should be posted to QuickStats, when available, with very few data problems.
 - **Target:** If data are not currently available on QuickStats, progress to make them available on QuickStats, should be evident over the past year.

Field Operations Supervisory & Non-supervisory Statisticians

The following standardized performance measures and targets illustrate what activities should be used in performance plans for State Directors, Deputy Directors and Statisticians who are directly responsible for processing data, summary, and estimate submission files for designated National probability and non-probability surveys. These measures and targets can also be used by support staff, if they are directly involved in program activities. The performance plans for Deputy Directors should include most of the measures and targets below. For non-supervisory statisticians, one or more of the measures and targets below may be used depending on survey responsibility and work assignments (and are not limited to this set of standardized measures and targets).

The attached worksheets illustrate the data that we are planning to use in monitoring progress towards successfully meeting the targets. As the worksheets are populated with April, May, and June survey data, the distribution of the actual results will be summarized and used as indicators of performance in the process of evaluating and comparing performance levels of the field offices. At this time, no “hard” targets have been set to evaluate levels of performance. Any performance information for non-probability surveys must be defined, maintained and tracked by the field office. Additional detailed information on the specific use of FO performance measures and targets, will be distributed in a separate document by HQ Field Operations management and discussed during the next FO management teleconference.

Goal 300: Maintain a high-quality list of all farm operations, producers, and growers in the State.

- **Measure:** Obtain new sources of farm operations, producers, and growers in the State. (Primarily for field office supervisors.)
 - **Target:** The State Director and/or Deputy Director requests farm lists from at least several new potential list sources during FY05 identified in the SSO List Building Plan submitted in response to OM T-3-05.
 - **Target:** The SSO obtains at least one list of potential farms from the new potential list sources contacted during FY05.
 - **Target:** The number of census eligible minority farms documented on the ELMO web-site at: http://nassnet/elmo/download/other_reports/minority_list_building_tables.pdf increases. Reasons for decreases are documented.

Goal 301: Effectively and efficiently administer and support the survey program and processes in the office.

- **Measure:** Prepare and follow office survey and processing instructions and procedures.
 - **Target:** Effectively manage the State’s survey processes using SMS or other tools for producing timely status of reports to office management and other office staff involved in the survey.
- **Measure:** Evaluate survey performance. (Primarily for Supervisors and Survey Administrators)
 - **Target:** For designated National probability surveys, the State’s survey response rates reflect an effective use of available staffing and allocated budget resources.
 - **Target:** Optimize the State’s data collection methods making efficient use of available resources to maintain the annual average cost per sample at or below the rate of inflation.

- **Target:** Optimize the State's data collection methods making efficient use of available resources to stay as close as possible to the data collection budget request as defined in work plans for designated National surveys.

Goal 302: Prepare high quality estimates and statistics

- **Measure:** Process data in a timely fashion as to meet processing schedules and due dates.
 - **Target:** For designated National probability surveys, the State's first SPS edits are processed on time to meet scheduled due dates.
 - **Target:** For designated National probability surveys, the State's final clean edited data files are processed on time to meet scheduled due dates.
- **Measure:** Data analysis is performed to identify data outliers that are validated and/or corrected prior to summarization.
 - **Target:** For designated National probability surveys, the State's final clean summaries are processed on time to meet scheduled due dates.
- **Measure:** Estimates and comments are submitted to Headquarters in a timely fashion as to meet submission due dates and deadlines.
 - **Target:** For designated National probability surveys, the State's commodity estimates and comments are submitted on time to meet scheduled submission due dates.
 - **Target:** For designated State non-probability surveys, the State's commodity estimates and comments are submitted on time to meet scheduled submission due dates.